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# THE GATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

by William Mc Fee



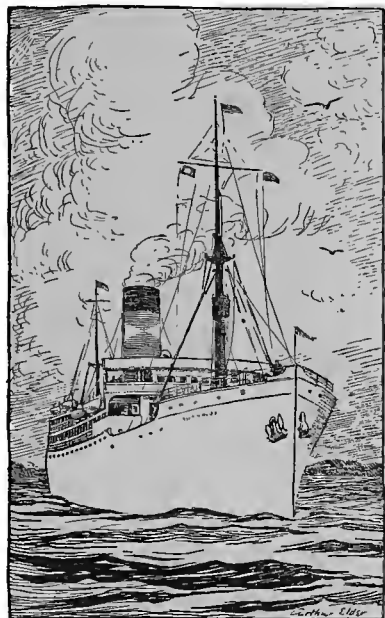
**GREAT WHITE FLEET**

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# The Gates of the CARIBBEAN



*The story of a  
Great White Fleet  
Caribbean Cruise  
by  
William McFee*

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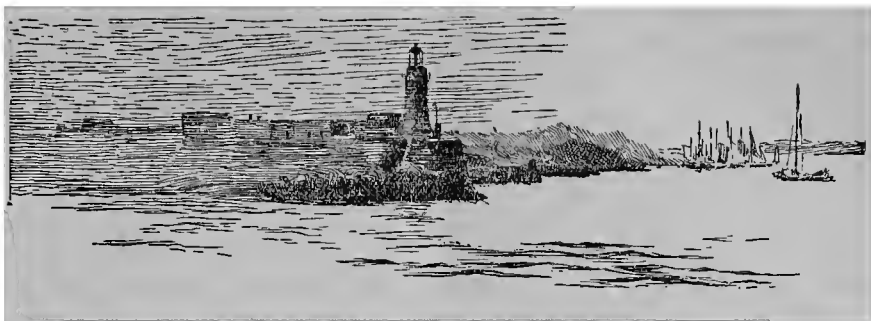
Route of Special Costa Rican Cruises.

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## The Gates of the Caribbean

By WILLIAM McFEE

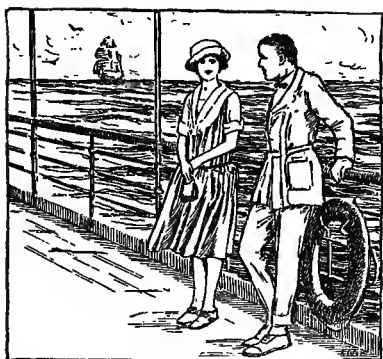


It is one of the compensations of modern life that a voyage is no longer, as the ironic French peasant was accustomed to describe it, "a little death." So far indeed have we come from the times when a traveler was looked upon as a creature of mysterious mental moods, strangely afflicted with a desire to go somewhere, that the possession of a wardrobe trunk is now of no more significance than a camera or a bag of golf clubs. It is indeed the thing to do, not so much from the selfish motive of improving one's mind, as for the finer fancy of seeing what the world is like and, speaking internationally, calling on the neighbors.

But going south, heading for one of the Gates of that alluring congeries of romance and modernity we call the Caribbean, our emotions have certain special qualities apart from those engendered by any ordinary trip abroad. Without entering into a lengthy disquisition as to the merits of our educational system, it must be conceded that when we speak of foreign parts we think readily of Europe, just as the Englishman, when America is mentioned, thinks at once of the United States. And so when we start southward, embarked at length upon our expedition to what we may conveniently call Latin-America, we have, quite possibly, a new curiosity, a vague notion of doing something romantic, and behind that, a few fantastic illusions as to where we are going and what we are about to see.

And it is to be noted at the outset that the enterprise is carried out under the more or less normal conditions of a comfortable human existence. It may conduce to the happiness of some to become microscopic units in a vessel so enormous that one may cross the ocean in it without ever seeing it, or spend many hours losing one's way in its interminable corridors. On the other hand, it is in accordance with average temperaments to find this vessel of ours, just and gracile in her modelling, spacious and modestly beautiful in her garnitures, an adequate substitute for the houses and country clubs we have left amid the wintery landscape at home.

That same wintery landscape, however, will be already receding by the time we have adjusted our personalities to the novel environment of shipboard life. It is a favorite recreation of witty folk to make disparaging remarks concerning the habits of those who travel by sea. Doctor Johnson set the melancholy fashion when he remarked dryly that being on a ship



was like being in jail, with the added risk of getting drowned. It is true that there are certain practical natures so addicted to dry land that they will admit no other reason for sailing on the ocean than their desire to reach some otherwise inaccessible destination. But for those who have what Walter Baghote called "an enjoying nature," who can from the safe seclusion of a deck-chair regard with philosophical benignity the strenuous pastimes of youth, the four days between New York

and Havana will pass all too quickly. By the time the mountains of Cuba emerge from the horizon, there will have come upon the ship's company a sense of solidarity born of the explicit object to which they have dedicated the coming days.

And a dedication it is, as they can testify who have seen rising out of the sea, the delicate outline and coloring of "San Cristobal de la Habana." "Like Valletta!" you hear some one say, who has been to the Mediterranean. And that is true. Though in Valletta you have to go a long way round for your Malecon, and the rocks beneath St. Angelo have not the sinister blackness behind the white surf that swirls and growls below the long scarred battlements of the Morro.

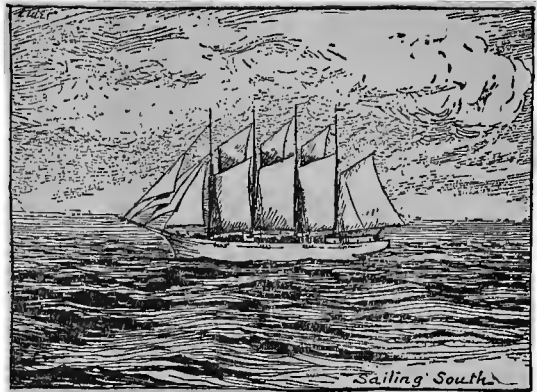
Here, as the ship moves serenely between the twin headlands which form the huge harbor, you encounter abruptly that alien and romantic atmosphere you have set forth to seek. For Havana has retained, in some magical and secret fashion of her own, and in spite of her indubitable advance in what we cheerfully describe as civilization, a great portion of the extraordinary glamour which lured within her walls the wealth, the beauty and the enterprise of the Indies in her days of greatness. And it holds an essential quality, this glamour, which makes it distinct from that of the Mediterranean or the Orient. It is Latin, and it is shot with gleams of tropical splendor: it is rendered sombre at times with memories of the dark deeds of *conquistadores* and the incredible exploits of the Brethren of the Coast.

But if these are to be found among our impressions as we look back, they will be in abeyance as we step ashore into the maelstrom of modern Havana city life, a maelstrom of brilliant sunshine and swiftly moving vehicles. There are no taxis as understood in northern lands, their work being done by innumerable Fords, more adapted to the narrow streets of a Spanish city. They are Fords of unbelievable sumptuousness, however, with elaborate upholstery and a system of colored plates which identify them to the initiated. And while it would not do to accuse their drivers of attempting suicide as they shoot with startling velocity athwart abrupt cross streets, they recall the story of the indignant American in Paris who



asked his driver "if they had no speed limit in that city." And he was assured that they had, but no one had ever reached it.

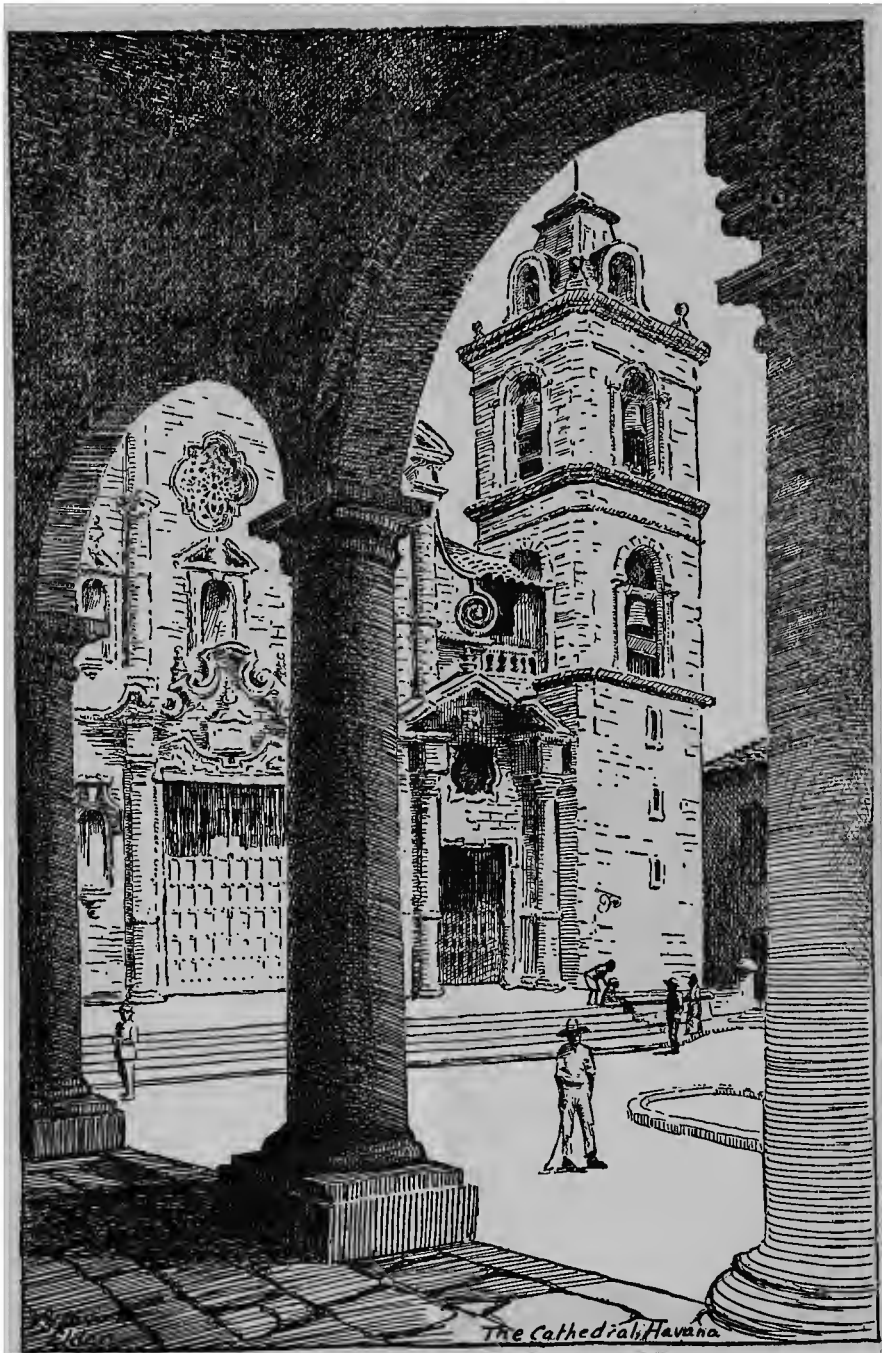
The compensation for these narrow thoroughfares comes with satisfying completeness when you arrive by devious ways, past ancient court yards and arcaded sidewalks, upon the center of this "Paris of the West Indies." A dozen streets radiate from it and you take naturally enough



The Prado, an immense double boulevard with a central pathway for pedestrians set between grass plots and trees, which will carry you clear out upon the sea wall of the Malecon. It is not suggested that motor cars should be avoided. Indeed they are to be commended as a swift and economical means of transit to many points of interest. The point emphasized here is that we, remaining but three days, and having taken our fill of the conventional sights, if we are to catch the magic of the town so that we may carry it with us, must take our way on foot as the sun sinks below the horizon.

As the dusk falls like a mantle of misty azure over the harbor and the lights spangle the distant shores, you pass the cavernous darkness of an ancient gateway, and pause in the shadow of the quaint belfry of a ruined church. And you become aware, under the roar of the modern metropolis, of a subtle murmur, faint and clear, reminding you of old days when tall galleons rode at anchor in the harbor and mailed heels rang on the pavements of the stately mansions among the palms.

Of today there is nothing so bizarre to a northern sportsman as the game which is played in the great public courts of the city under the name of *Jai Alai*. To us who have seen it in the old world it is the Basque game of *Pelote*, the protagonists wearing on their right wrists a curious contraption of woven wicker, like a scoop, with which the ball is hurled with tremendous force against the further wall of the court. And great is the excitement when the players run neck and neck and the man you have backed wins and you discover, to your astonishment, that your two dollar ticket is redeemable for a respectable sum which you promptly reinvest on the favorite, and lose, in a highly sportsmanlike manner. Yet your ultimate gain is to be recorded if measured in the wealth of new and fantastic impressions—the lights, hung high over the great rectangles of the courts, the fans and perfumes of the ladies, the amazing dignity and importance of the small boy who deals out fresh balls, the manoeuvres of the ticket speculators who haunt the outer vestibules, and the harsh brazen voices of the bookmakers as they rouse the excitement to fever heat with new and unheard of odds.



The Cathedral, Havana.

And so, all too soon, we are out upon the sea again, Cuba a long blue hummock on the horizon as we head for the Yucatan Channel. It is here that we enter the actual waters of the Caribbean.

A glance at the map shows the West Indian system to be outside, rather than within the Caribbean. Eastward from Cuba, with Haiti and Porto Rico forming the main line of the northerly breakwater, there runs an ever diminishing chain of islands that curve to the southward as the Windward Group and couple to the continent of South America at Trinidad. Within these boundaries lies a sea with a history, a climate and a civilization all its own. From the submerged city of old Port Royal to the delta of the Magdalena, from Bridgetown in Barbadoes to Belize in British Honduras, the Caribbean Sea was the stage on which were enacted the peculiar exploits of the gentlemen who alluded to themselves, very modestly, as the Brethren of the Coast. However, a careful examination of this part of the world proves that they are now extinct.

The business of piracy was never handed down from father to son, nor did many of the regular practitioners live long enough to enjoy the fruits of their industry. A reflection that must inevitably occur to us today, while reading the lives of the pirates and buccaneers of the American Coast, is that if these men had used the same energy, ability and resource in honest merchandising, they would have all died millionaires; instead of hanging at somebody's yardarm. Nothing is more extraordinary in the history of that period than the utter blindness of all these desperadoes to the colossal wealth concealed in the virgin soil beyond their dirty and disorderly settlements.

These thoughts will be inspired, reasonably enough, by our arrival in Jamaica. By this time the intelligent traveler—and it is a gratifying feature of a West Indian tour that so many of one's fellow travelers are intelligent—has become sufficiently familiar with a maritime existence to take much of it for granted. He will have discovered the extraordinary number of combinations rendered possible by dropping a rubber ring a given number of times on a squared board. He will have reached the inevitable conclusion about deck quoits: that nobody ever has or ever will acquire skill enough to win from anybody else (unless he take a voyage round the world and devote every moment to practice). He will have learned the true inwardness of that mysterious sport, deck-golf, when played with a lady partner, or better still a lady opponent, and he will have found that the ship's pianos, contradicting the majority of travelers' tales, are in tune. All this is very broadening, and the approach to Jamaica is welcomed as affording an insight into the workings of an authentic colony.

Such is Jamaica, a compact, orderly and extraordinarily fertile island that looks like a





blue mountain in the distance, and remains startlingly blue as you approach it, so that when you finally land you are not surprised to discover that the main backbone of it is called Blue Mountain with Blue Mountain Peak soaring into the clouds between you and the other side of the island.

For it is the custom here to abandon the ship for a day or two at Port Antonio, and while she eventually finds her way round by sea to Kingston, we go to Hotel Titchfield and later take the road over the mountains.

Here at once is apparent a happy distinction which Jamaica

can claim over many adjacent territories. She has good roads. She is a very old established country, for she began making sugar even before Havana was founded, and you will see as your car drops down the hill presently, the vestiges of old stone aqueducts which the early Spanish planters built to irrigate their fields. There are other views, too, of buildings with formidable walls raised by slaves but overgrown now by the all-conquering foliage.

And perhaps it is of that foliage in its almost incredible abundance and variety that you will carry away the most vivid memories. As the clean, well-graded road leaves the north shore and you begin to ascend the Wag Water Valley, the vegetation crowds to the very edges and strives to arch itself overhead. And as you climb and the road skirts the precipitous rim of some deep green gully, you can look down and behold gardens on end, as it were, vertical vegetation; and you marvel by what eccentric devices the industrious agriculturist manages to achieve his miraculous tasks. And looking more intently upon the scene as it unwinds in a polychromatic vista, you observe that every hummock and hill, the very sides of otherwise inaccessible gorges, are scored with tiny regular terraces on which at intervals microscopic humans can be seen, without any apparent means of support, engaged upon the cultivation of coffee and cane and bananas. On the upper reaches of the mountains lie great forests of hardwood trees, while nearby, and wherever they can find room, the green plumes of the bamboo, like enormous ostrich feathers, cover the slopes. And at intervals there towers above the road some enormous ceiba tree, whose trunk is like a fortification, so strongly is it set into the earth, and whose branches extend like great cantilevers to support their vast extent of shade.



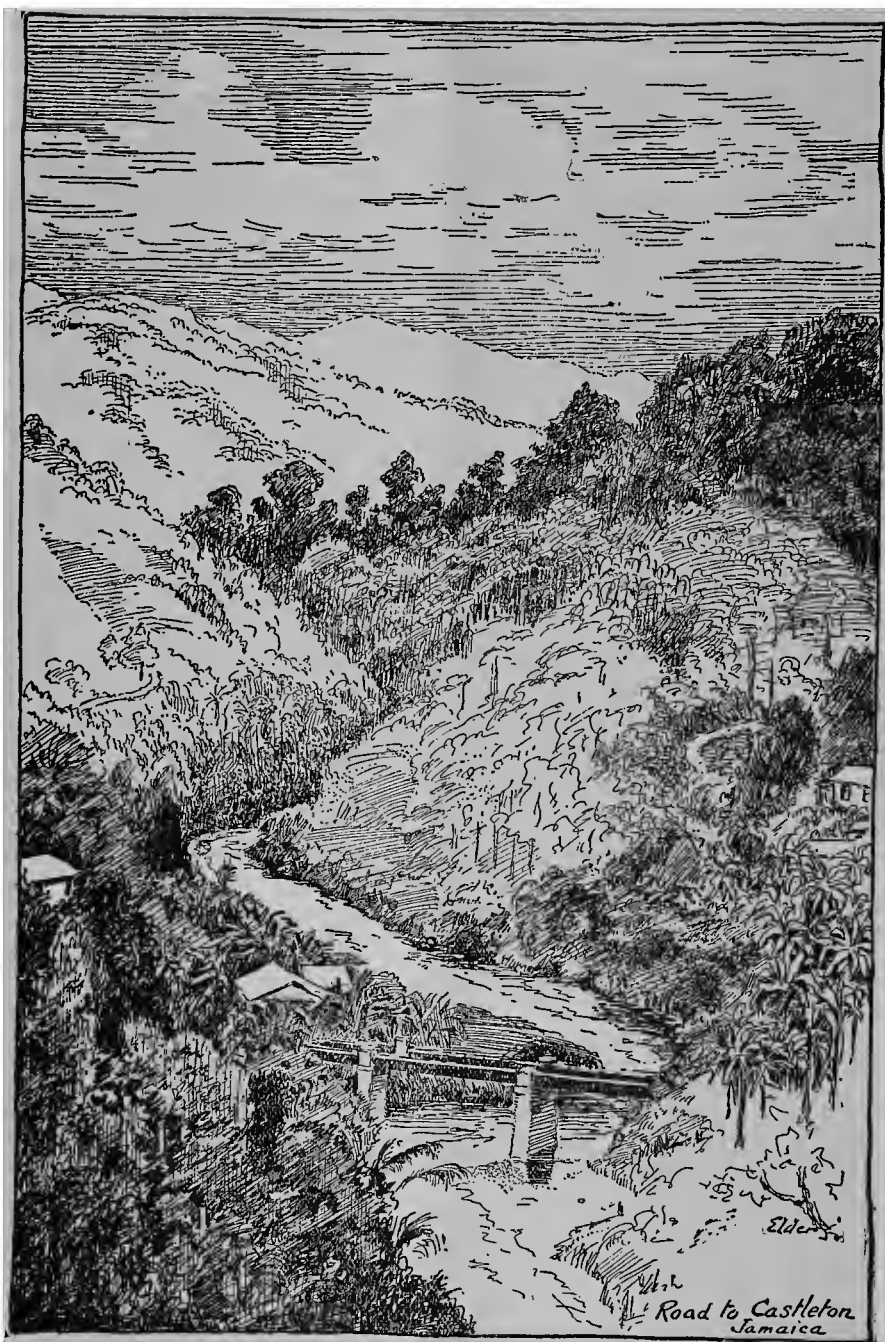


**H**ERE will come at intervals ebony trees with heavy foliage amongst which the fruit shines like globes of luminous amber. There are palms of bewildering variety, from the oblong "traveler's palm" which bleeds cold water when stabbed, to the slender cocoanut tree, likewise a dispenser of cool liquids, and the royal palm, superb in his tall beauty, a single lovely column crowned with a tuft of matchless symmetry.

Castleton Gardens, with a gorgeous profusion of palms, ferns and blooms; and then, as the road twists and turns in one hair-pin bend after another, and you comment upon the occasional ironic warnings to "drive carefully"—as if any one would do anything else if he wanted to get home again—the shoulder of Stoney Hill is won and the earth falls away from the road in a grand sweep. In the distance lies the blue Caribbean once more, with Kingston Harbor sleeping in the sun behind the Palisadoes.

Kingston, the metropolis of the Island, lies on the northern side of a great harbor, and its situation in the wide plain at the foot of the Blue Mountain Range raises the temperature during the morning hours. In the afternoon a breeze blows strongly across the water. The stores should not be missed, especially those devoted to what are generically described as curios. It is here you can gratify the universal desire to get something for the folks back home. Here you can purchase articles of formidable utility such as baskets and hats; or other things of no utility at all yet which certainly give pleasure to the untraveled. Such things as, for example, a vase made from a joint in a giant bamboo, a table center fashioned from the silky fibres of a native plant, and sea shells of gorgeous tintings. Fish, too, of grotesque proportions, safely dried and varnished, and cocoanuts carved into amazing shapes, will tempt the benevolent citizen as he goes shopping.

And it may be our fortune, as we fare further, to discover a shop where have come down from many a manor house in the island, some of the old fashioned furnishings of early days. Here, among pieces of authentic china, you will see those substantial Colonial candle sticks, with heavy bases and huge glass globes, so that even a hurricane could



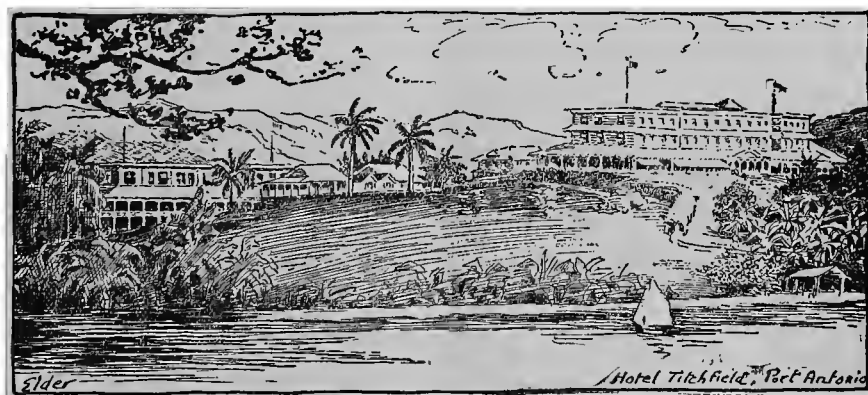
not blow them out. Here, too, you may come upon old silver and glass and curious ornaments of coral and aquamarine and jet, the prized trinkets of by-gone simple hearts.

Yet of all the memories we carry from Kingston these are not the chief. Most of all we shall remember the oasis of palms behind the hotel, away from the grind of the trolley car and the dust of the country roads, where the breeze blows across rippling water from Port Royal and the world becomes but a dim adumbration of soft lights and sounds seen and heard amidst tropical foliage, while under a sky crowded with unsuspected galaxies, we can distinguish the movements of departing merchantmen and the loom of white yachts at anchor.

So far, however, we have seen but the fringe of Latin-America. Both Cuba and Jamaica have achieved something essentially belonging to themselves alone; something we can call racial as well as national, yet which derives from the northern races. For if Cuba has emerged from her unhappy Colonial period under the vigorous tutelage of the United States, so that she can stand alone, Jamaica bears upon the face of her institutions and community life the ineffaceable imprint of the Mother Country beyond the sea.

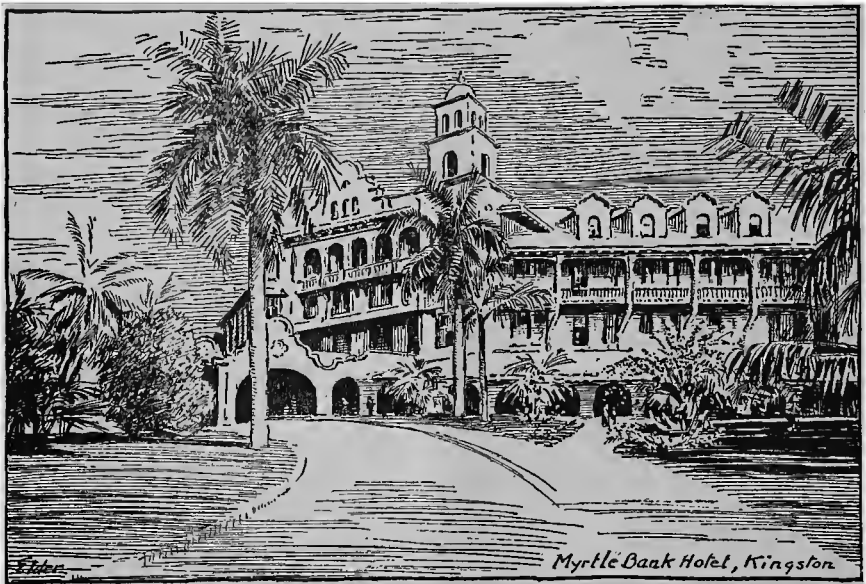
But Latin-America is something beyond either of these, and it will be necessary to climb up out of sight of the sea, to traverse the lowlands of the coast, before you can begin to sense the atmosphere of an authentic foreign civilization. Because modern transportation inevitably brings along with it the genius of the race which evolved it and the North American, with his ship and his railroad and his hotel, tends to find himself at home everywhere; whereas the main lure of travel is to get away from home and into foreign parts.

Yet the experienced traveler, stepping ashore for the first time at the northern end of the Panama Canal would wonder how to classify the impressions made by so strange a medley of North and South and of East and West. Here is no clean-cut racial line, but rather an almost unimaginable conglomeration of types. It is as though a tide of heterogeneous humanity



had surged up against the immense white concrete walls of the Canal Zone and had been flung back upon itself in a burst of chaotic color and movement which is the City of Colon. Emerging from dock buildings so clean and so vast that there is nothing save the great Baths of Caracalla to compare with them, the timid visitor avoids being run down by a joyous negro on an electric baggage truck, and steps across an oasis of tall palms among which can be seen the romantic looking offices of steamship lines—offices which bear a striking outward resemblance to Oriental palaces.

Beyond these and the immediate track of the railroad, one abandons Efficiency and Sanitation and Ferro Concrete, and comes quite suddenly upon Life. As you glance along this exotic Main Street, the frame verandahed stores crowding over the sidewalk to the very curb, so that you are always sheltered from sudden tropical down-pours, and as you watch the bizarre manifestations of alien activity around you, it is difficult to avoid comparing it with the jungle itself. And the impression grows as you steer gently among the myriad of vendors of fruit and candies and newspapers and lottery tickets; as you peer into cavernous stores where brilliant-eyed Orientals lie in wait for the unwary; and catch sight abruptly, within some dark court, of staircases, climbing into intricate confusion and festooned with clothing of dazzling colors, like the vines and foliage of the Isthmian forests. And you observe with a certain amount of trepidation, as you pursue your adventures, that the apparently impregnable front of these lines of caravanserais are pierced by narrow and mysterious alleys, as though the dense thickets of buildings were infested by rapacious animals who have beaten out these perilous pathways to the outside world.







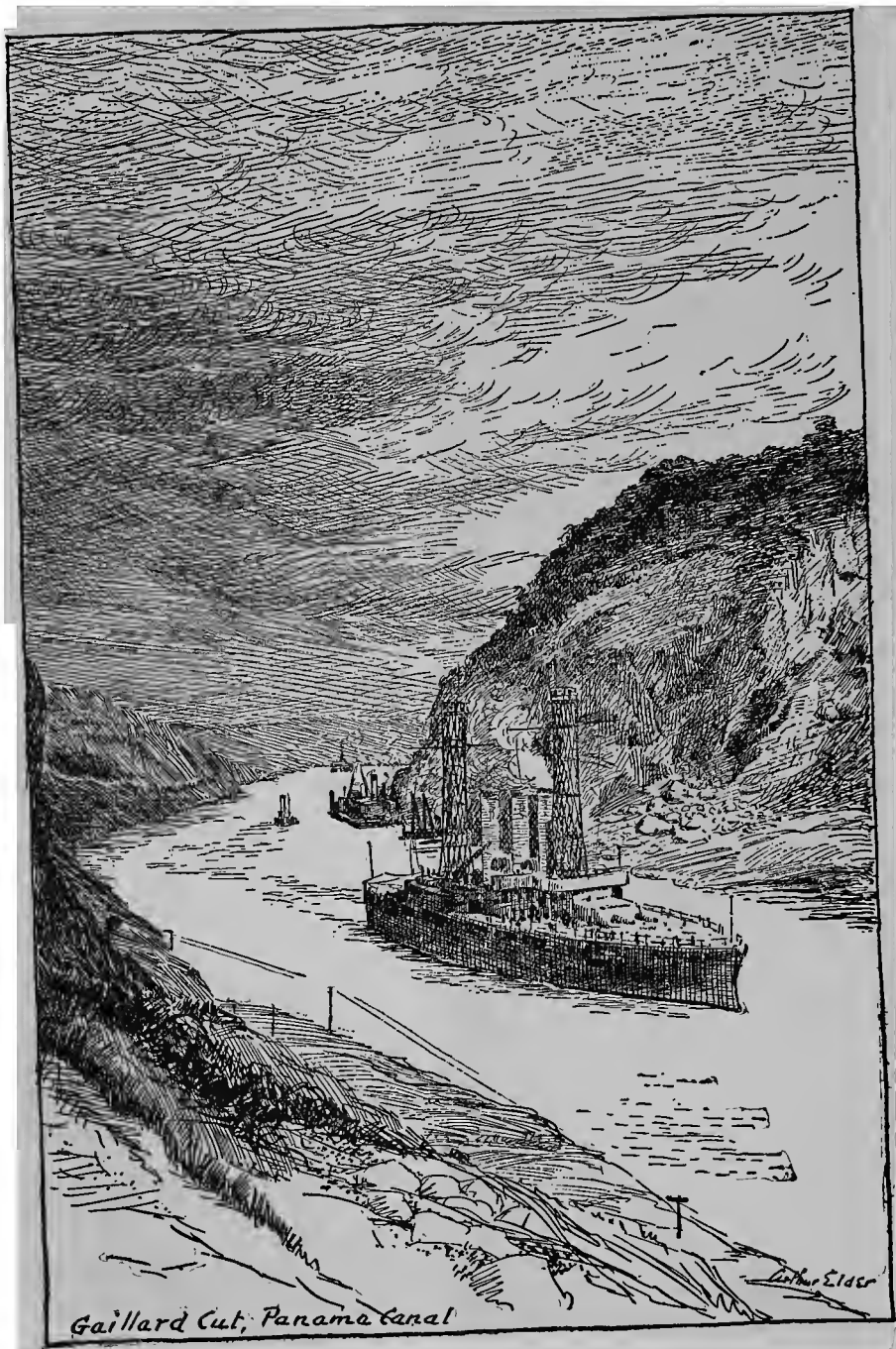
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OWEVER, this may be only the fancy of the timid stranger as he wavers along, astounded by the infinite variety of the wares he is implored to inspect. Gentlemen from the remotest provinces of the Orient burst forth into soft eloquence as he passes. He discovers silken bath robes of fabulous designs and tintings, combs of ornately carved ivory, trinkets of jade and shell and lacquer-ware. He will be importuned to examine astonishing fabrics from Egypt, hats from Ecuador, and pongee suitings from farthest India. Dignified persons with gleaming eyes, outlandish head dress and a remarkable command of English, will spellbind him into buying articles of fantastic design and problematic utility.

In and out among the pillars which support the arcades darts the eternal small boy at his eternal job of selling papers, while at every corner local residents regard the lottery tickets pinned upon boards with profound deliberation before taking their weekly chance at wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.

Such are a few of the scenes which are to be observed by the tolerant and leisured voyager as he wanders about one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. And perhaps one of the most fugitive fancies flitting through his mind, as he pursues his way across the Zone, will be that he has come into a country of gigantic aviaries, so strongly do these rectangular screened dwellings, set amid gorgeous tropical scenery, resemble bird cages.

Of the Canal itself it is imperative to say that the tourist will be doing himself a serious disservice if he fails to become thoroughly familiar with Isthmian history before he arrives at Cristobal. It is a very complex affair, with its roots in the almost forgotten past, entangled with a deal of wickedness and folly after the fashion of human affairs generally. But if the voyager begins, on the southward journey, to consult the ship's library and discover for himself how the California gold rush of 1849 brought into existence a traffic and a railroad from sea-to-sea, and how gentleman-adventurers of all nations scrambled across under unbelievable conditions, he will probably continue to read until the story has become coherent in the mind. The chief difficulty is to realize adequately the change which has been wrought in the face of the country inside of twenty years.



Gaillard Cut, Panama Canal

Yet one would like to evoke, if only for a moment, the scenes that met the eyes of those fresh-faced, dauntless young men from New England and New York as they came up the old Chagres River, the black boys at the oars singing the song that raged across the world:

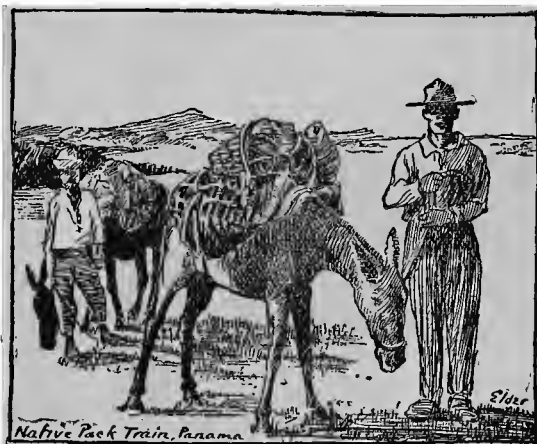
“Oh Susannah! don't you cry for me!  
I'm off to California wid my banjo on my knee.”

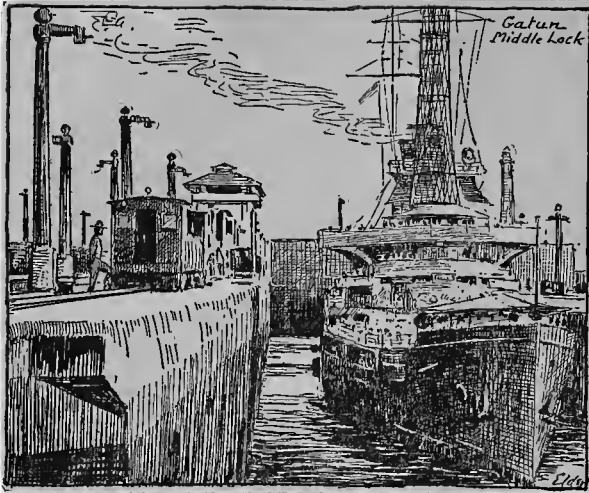
One would like to get back for a moment the extraordinary emotion of these young adventurers as they sat watching the walls of the impenetrable jungle slide by, walls of palm and teak and ebony, of sycamore and acacia and wild banana, looped and swathed in vines of inconceivable variety with blooms that terrified by their unexpected loveliness, until their canoes halted at a village called Gatun where their descendants have raised a mountain and created a lake. A strange and unforeseen rendering of the song the gold seekers hummed to keep up their spirits as they pushed on into the darkness of the jungle:

“I'll scrape the mountains clean old girl,  
I'll drain the river dry,  
I'm off to California  
Susannah don't you cry!”

We have indeed scraped the mountains clean and drained the rivers dry, so that what used to be the adventure of a lifetime is now no more than an hour's run over a modern roadbed. The story of the bright young visitor who caught sight of the big P. R. R. on the freight cars and who remarked wistfully that he had not known the Pennsylvania System extended so far south or he would have taken it, may not be entirely authentic, but it should be accepted as an excellent allegory.

On no account should Old Panama be missed. There is not much of it left, not only because it never was a large place but because it seemed destined to pass the years in a state of perpetual destruction. No self respecting pirate, it appears from the histories, could think of going home without attacking and destroying Panama. With some of the more eminent it became a habit. If Havana was too well guarded, if Porto Bello was not yet sufficiently reconstructed to be again demolished, if Cartagena proved too precarious a gamble for anything less than an army, then the pirate temporarily out of a job, would instantly propose an attack on Panama. And while this sort of thing makes a picturesque page in history it is not to be expected that Panama, after so many assiduous destructions, should have very much left to show. /





Baptista Antonio, an Italian surveyor sent in 1587 by the Spanish king to report upon this weakness of Panama, stated three sundry places where it might without difficulty be taken by the pirates. It is safe to say that every pirate who came along succeeded one way or another. After a vacation in Port Royal, the invigorated desperadoes would cross the Caribbean and start up the Chagres

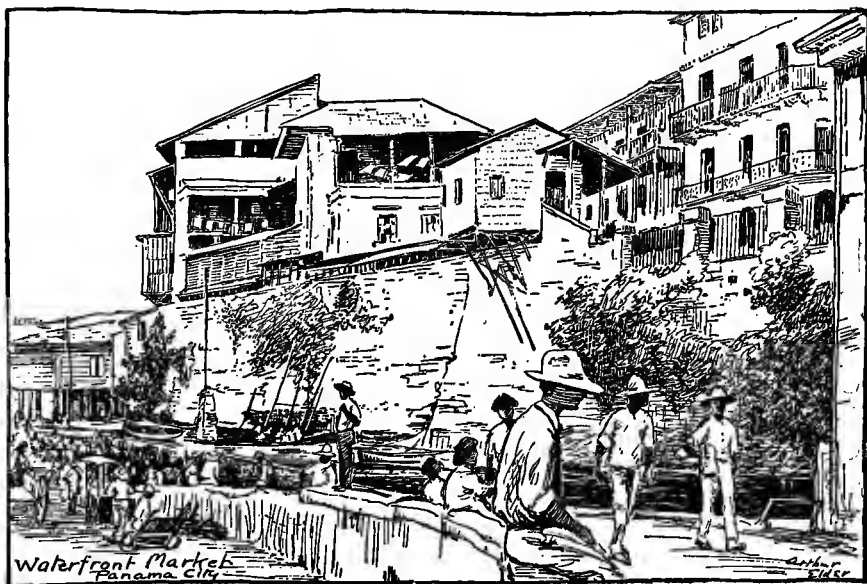
River. Doubtless it passed through the minds of many of these extraordinary beings, as they fought the poisoned arrows of the Indians and the poisoned stings of the mosquitoes, that a canal would have been a convenience, but they were all in too great a hurry to clean up and return to their homes. The tale of their exploits in this part of the world has been amusingly set down by one of them, Jan Esquemeling, a Dutchman, the only literary pirate on record at that early day, which was long before the era of "pirated editions," of course. Esquemeling was one of those deserted by Morgan who, after all the hard work was done, sailed off without dividing the spoil. The theory that Morgan suspected Esquemeling of literary tendencies and abandoned him on that account is not borne out by our knowledge of Morgan's character. So shrewd a commander would have found some use for a ready pen.

As we return to the ship and recall the fantastic history of this narrow strip of volcanic jungle and fever-haunted swamp, it is impossible to avoid a feeling that the men who faced and conquered the unspeakable perils of the transit, whether *conquistadores* or merchants or buccaneers, whether adventurers for gold or railroad builders, were the unconscious instruments of one of those mighty inspirations which are transmitted from one generation to another and which are the compensating forces of the world against the terrors of jungle and swamp and the darkness of the unknown. They were the forerunners, the pioneers of whom Kipling has sung so vividly:

"He shall desire loneliness, and his desire shall bring  
 Hard on his heels a thousand wheels, a people and a King.  
 He shall come back on his own track, and by his scarce-cooled camp  
 There he shall meet the roaring street, the derrick and  
 the stamp:  
 For he must blaze a nation's ways with hatchet and with brand,  
 'Till on his last-won wilderness an empire's outposts stand."

You will find this fancy coming back more strongly and perhaps get hold of the essential spirit of the great enterprise which has so transmuted the Isthmus, as you return to the ship some evening, and your eye is engaged by the austere classical loveliness of the enormous buildings of the new docks. New, and of a stark utility unsurpassed in architecture, yet beholding their facades in the luminous tropic night across the vast expanse of level concrete floors, you can do them justice only by conceiving them to be the stones of a great achievement, the visible temples of a powerful and benign civilization.

In the four hundred years since the great navigator himself dropped anchor inside Grape Cay and went ashore not far from where the city of Limon now stands, men have ceased to regard the Caribbean as a "Sea of Darkness." Yet the configuration of these coasts remains very much as Columbus saw it from his caravel. To him it was indeed a sea of darkness and doubt. As he paced his deck and watched the long line of white surf break on the yellow sand beneath the palms, and raised his eyes to the blue distances of the Cordilleras beyond the impenetrable jungles of the lowlands, he was turning over in his mind the problem which had become the dominating passion of his life. These coasts, rich as they might be in gold, were to him so many obstacles holding him back in his search for the way through. It is a measure of his courage and his genius that he never lost his faith in that strange country he called Cathay, or his conviction that sooner or later that way through would be discovered. As it has been, though it may be doubted if Columbus ever imagined it would take so long!



The present day voyager, while he can evoke easily enough the picture of the intrepid old captain sheltering from the slow, smooth undulations of the easterly swell under Grape Cay, is spared the annoyance of wading ashore and beating off bands of hostile Caribs. A maximum of modern convenience seems to have been attained without demolishing the tropical luxuriance of the place, for the city is invisible behind a grove of magnificent Indian laurels save where a few houses climb the green bluffs behind the plain. Indeed it is not easy to keep that same tropical vegetation where it belongs. It is one of the foremost differences between the northern and the central zones, that in the latter human beings are engaged in an active struggle with the plant life. There is something almost sinister in the relentless energy and indomitable intrusion of the vegetation.

There was a time when the pious settlers of Costa Rica had other enemies than the jungle to contend with, and our friends the buccaneers, engaged upon the enterprise of reaching the Southern Sea, but with the ulterior motive of raiding the riches of Peru, appeared in force at this same point where we disembark, behind Grape Cay. This was in 1665 when the art of piracy had reached a high degree of complexity and perfection. A gentleman named Mansfelt, who was so eminent as an ocean highwayman that he called himself an admiral, left Port Royal in Jamaica with a thousand men in fifteen caravels. The position of Mansfelt is to be gauged by the fact that his chief of staff or vice-admiral was Henry Morgan himself. A more complete company of scoundrels and riff-raff it would have been impossible to conceive even in Port Royal. The mere effort to visualize those ships with their dreadful crews of unshorn, unwashed tatterdemalions from all the stews of Europe descending upon a decent coast evokes a gesture of disgust. It was one of the penalties of enterprise outstripping the running of law that such a thing should have been possible.





UT the interest for us in all this lies in the fact that when the buccaneers landed where Limon now stands they were bound upon the capture and pillage of Cartago, the capital city of the country; and on setting forth they followed a line more or less corresponding to the route we take in our railroad journey into the interior. By a sudden raid at night they captured the village of Matina which lay in their track towards the Reventazon River, it being their plan, as it is ours, to ascend the valley of that stream, skirting the shoulders of the volcanoes Turrialba and Irazu and so arriving at Cartago.

They must have been an extraordinary sight as they came swimming and rafting themselves across the rapid flood of the Reventazon, that mob of cutthroats from every port from Antwerp to Genoa. The books tell us they comprised English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Flemish, Greek and Levantine. They counted among their commanders John Davis, Joseph Broadley and Jean Le Maire. It was what an actor would call a star caste. They came across, over six hundred of them, while the humble laborers on the opposite shore stood in amaze at such an incredible portent. All their lives they had heard of the diabolical deeds of the filibusters of the Indies, and now here they were, their cutlasses in their teeth, breasting the current, their gleaming eyes and terrifying moustachios approaching with frightful rapidity. No doubt panic unnerved these poor creatures for only one, a hardy Indian from the highlands, was able to understand what could be done. As the buccaneers raced out of the river he dived in and swam back to the other side and ran home as fast as he could. It was only a few miles, but as the train climbs the northern flanks of the Reventazon Valley and you look from the windows of the chair car across the savage loveliness of those precipitous tropical gorges, you will get a dim notion of the journey that Indian made through the jungles of Costa Rica.

But the buccaneers were to discover that they had aroused a body of men who had no intention of resigning their property to any ragamuffin who might rush up and demand it. The Spanish colonists of Costa Rica were the vigorous descendants of the *conquistadores* who

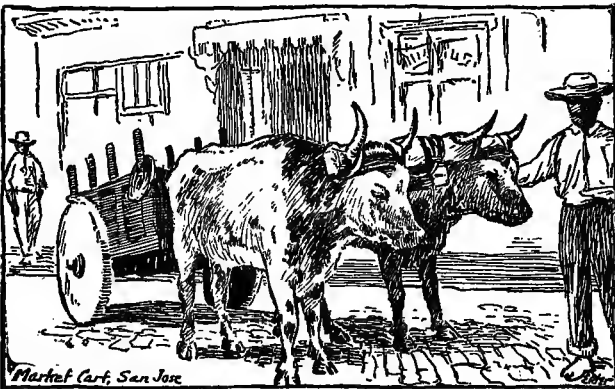
were tougher and more determined than the toughest of buccaneers, and in a very short space the latter, who had arrived at Turrialba, were coming to the view that things were not going entirely right.

They had marched and scrambled and swung themselves over cliffs and over the edges of ravines as the tortuous track led them upward towards the mighty cone of Turrialba with his cap of white clouds, and they were much cheered by the information that the young ladies of the city of Cartago were extremely good looking and no doubt inclined to have a romantic interest in a swaggering buccaneer from over the blue Caribbean. And no doubt, also, the clatter of so many different languages in their ranks added a certain varied interest to the journey. But instead of romantic young ladies, bullets began to arrive from the dense jungle that beset Turrialba on all hands, and the buccaneers, not knowing how many regiments of warlike and indignant Spanish colonists were concealed behind these menacing screens of leaves, suddenly broke away down the mountainside and never stopped until they reached Matina. A number of them fell into the river as they came down pell-mell and it is gratifying to reflect that the alligators were on hand to receive them. From Matina they hurried across the lowlands, now covered with banana plantations, and arriving at Portete, as they called Limon in those days, got on board and sailed out into the Caribbean as fast as possible.

Wealth no doubt is a relative thing and the freebooter who descended upon these smiling hospitable coasts and who slaughtered the simple agriculturists and smashed their houses and temples in his frantic anxiety to accumulate gold, quite possibly imagined himself an extremely clever and efficient person. The best we can say of him now is that he was deficient in vision. Very few pirates were prominent citizens in their own sections, and their way of life did not give them the opportunity to appreciate the riches latent in the fertility of those valleys and uplands to whose inhabitants they were about as welcome as a pestilence.

But it is worth noting that both to the old time buccaneers and to modern commerce the problem was one of transportation. No one who makes the journey from Puerto Limon to the capital of Costa Rica, will ever forget the experience. There are probably but two other ascents which can be

adequately compared with it—the line from Lima up the Andes and the railway from Vera Cruz to Mexico City. There is a story about the former road which comes to the mind as the train carries us briskly over the dizzy gorges and through the cork-



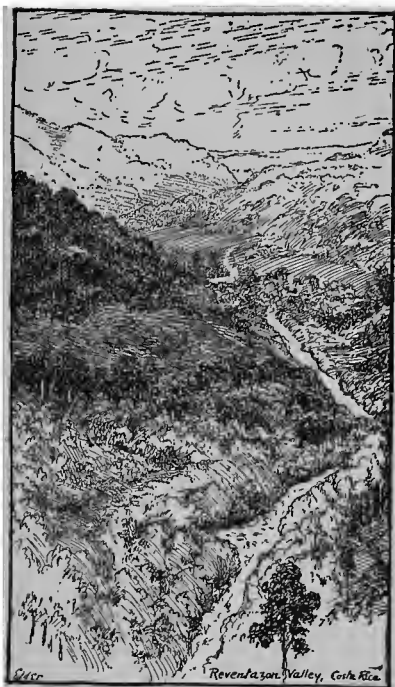


screw cuttings of the line to San Jose. The constructor was warned that the loose shale was an impossible basis for a railroad. He retorted that rather than give up he would hang his rails from balloons while he was consolidating the earth underneath. It must be admitted that at times the track of our railroad seems to be suspended in some such way over the Reventazon. There is one glimpse to be held in memory, a vista of many shaded greens and blue distances, cloud capped peaks and rich plantations, with the river a streak of gleaming silver coming down the valley. And from the other side, if you are lucky and the clouds are not too heavy, you will see the vast crater of Mount Irazu, with his forty mile plume of smoke and steam rolling away across the central plateau.

The difference in climate between Limon and San Jose is not to be ignored. As you sit in the train waiting for it to start, you will admit

that the temperature is undoubtedly hot. But when the train has achieved the five thousand feet altitude of the hundred mile journey, and you are established at your hotel in San Jose, you become aware of the fact that nobody is wearing a straw hat; and as you go out in the square after dinner to listen to the band, you have a distinct impression that an overcoat would by no means be superfluous.

To the visitor from North America the famous cities of the Latin republics have a remote and modest air. For obvious reasons the European founders of these communities chose the more or less inaccessible highlands of the interior, for in the days before the connection between mosquitoes and malaria was understood, the *tierras calientes*, the hot lands of the coast, were impossible. Even the natives could not be induced to go down there. And San Jose, reposing upon a slight eminence in the center of a lofty shallow plateau like a saucer, so that from every street you can see the plain sloping away, with the rim rising in the distance, has no tall buildings like American cities. The available area renders them unnecessary. The long orderly lines of white houses with their roofs of dark red Spanish tiles often surmounted by a couple of dignified looking cormorants give one a very vivid impression of a foreign yet comprehensive civilization. But it is in the evening in the Plaza, the heart of the town, when the magnificently attired military band comes forth to demonstrate the Latin-American's virtuosity as a musician, and the walks beneath the rich foliage of the little park are alive with crowds of young people moving round in orderly gaiety, that the



spirit of the place is to be caught in all its charm. The visitor will reflect with interest that when those old buccaneers were informed that the ladies of Costa Rica were pretty, there was a good deal of truth in the report, if one is to judge by their descendants. Impression is gained from the evening promenade that the density of beauty to the acre must be very high in San Jose and the inhabitants will not deny that their women are generously endowed with a more than ordinary portion of the graces of body and mind.

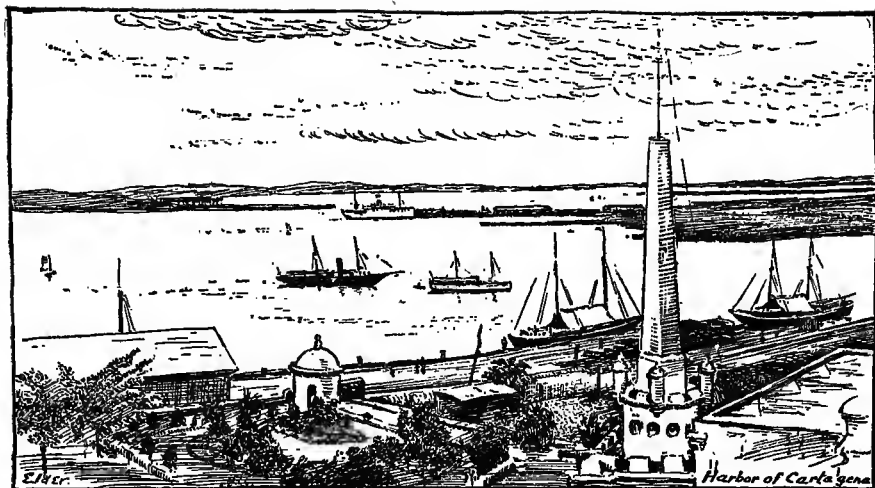
It would be foolish to conclude a visit to so interesting a section of Central America without seeing the vestiges of the aboriginals in the National Museum. The Indians of these parts invariably buried a quantity of golden ornaments with the late owners, and these, together with their pottery, show a high degree of craftsmanship.

And so, as the sun is setting behind the Cordilleras we gain the lowlands once more and come to a halt at the head of the harbor. There is another experience in store for the initiated which may help to crystalize the memories of an alien land. It takes but a moment to walk through the little park close by, where the Indian laurels make a dark tunnel and the lime-washed boles of the royal palms rise like huge columns, until we arrive at a long low sea-wall wet with the spray of the waves that are forever rolling in and bursting with a sound of muffled thunder. It is here, beneath the rustle of the palms in the landward breeze and the boom of the surf, that we can savour in all its intensity that alluring and elusive emotion which the tropics evoke in the hearts of those who hail from northern climes. We watch the lights coming out clear in the luminous dusk of evening, and the smooth swell as it lifts some lonely fisher in his tiny canoe; and in the sob and suck of the tide rip through the rocks below we can hear:

“The long backed breakers croon  
Their endless ocean legends to the lazy, locked lagoon.”

And what are those tales we hear as the crabs slip away from us and vanish down the rough sea wall? Tales of long gone evil and ill-starred ambition. Tales of heroic struggles against the darkness of the forests. Tales, too, of great things done in our time, of indomitable energy matched against the terrors of the wilderness, of craft and shrewd resource. Of man's faith in man and in his destiny, of failure and defeat, of ultimate achievement. So they come to us, those voices of the tropic sea, ere we start on the quick run home through the Gates of the Caribbean to take up once more our own problems, in the crisper northern air.





**T**HE routes of the steamships of the Great White Fleet are by no means confined to that which takes us southward via Havana, Jamaica, Panama and Costa Rica. Equally enjoyable and fascinating are the cruises to Colombia and Guatemala.

They are operated all the year round, the Colombian ships sailing from New York every week, and the Guatemalan ships sailing fortnightly. And the charm of all these cruises lies in their dissimilarity. You may take a different Great White Fleet Cruise every year for your vacation and come home each time with distinctly new impressions and inspirations.

As in the case of the Costa Rican Cruise many entertaining shore excursions are included without charge in the Colombian Cruise during the winter season.

These steamers proceed from New York direct to Kingston, Jamaica, where motor cars are provided for the trip to the lovely Castleton Gardens. From Kingston the course is southwest across the Caribbean to Colon and from there passengers are conveyed by train across the Isthmus to Panama City. On our return to Colon, the ship sails eastward through the Gulf of Darien to the ancient and beautiful city of Cartagena, the "Queen of the Oceans," as the poet Heredia calls her in one of his poems.

The next port of call is Puerto Colombia, seaport of Barranquilla, one of the most important commercial centers of this region. From here the river steamers and hydroplanes leave for Bogota, Colombia's capital nestled in the mountains of the interior.

Less than sixty miles east of Puerto Colombia is Santa Marta, shielded behind scarred hummocks of volcanic rock from the easterly breeze and backed by the imposing ranges of the eastern Andes. Here we motor to San Pedro the home of the liberator, Bolivar, and well called "the Mount Vernon of South America." We also visit Rio Frio a United Fruit Company plantation where an opportunity is given to see the various processes of banana culture.



**T**HE Guatemalan Cruise takes us from New York to Santiago, Cuba, thence to Kingston, Jamaica and from there to Belize in British Honduras and to Puerto Barrios, the terminal of the Guatemalan Railroad System.

Sixty miles out of Puerto Barrios is Quirigua where are the most important relics of the lost civilization of the Maya Indians. It is a region of richly fascinating antiquity.

Twelve hours distant by rail from Puerto Barrios is Guatemala City, one of the most interesting of the Latin-American capitals and well worthy of a visit during the steamer's lay-over.

Additional Great White Fleet Cruise service is maintained from New Orleans, ships sailing twice each week for sixteen and seventeen day cruises. The ports of call are Havana, Cuba; Cristobal, Panama Canal Zone; Bocas del Toro, Panama; Tela, Honduras, and Port Limon, Costa Rica.

Whichever Great White Fleet Cruise you decide upon—Costa Rican, Colombian, Guatemalan or one of those from New Orleans—you will experience an equal measure of pleasure and gratification. No one of the Central American countries and the West Indian Islands is more interesting than another.

The steamships are all especially designed for cruising in the Caribbean Sea and while some are a little larger than others, the same high standard of service is aimed at for all. They are the most expensively constructed vessels of their kind in the world. All cruise state-rooms are outside and are first class only. Not how large, but how fine, best expresses the thought dominating the construction of the ships of the Great White Fleet; a steamship service designed to meet the most exacting requirements of the traveler.





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